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Recommended Citation

Dawson, R. "The Empress's Nose: A Parable, After Feynman," *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, Volume 10 Issue 1 (January 2020), pages 544-544. DOI: 10.5642/jhummath.202001.32 . Available at: <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/vol10/iss1/32>

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The Empress's Nose (A Parable, After Feynman)

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“How long is the Empress's nose?”
the young man asked.

“Nobody knows,” replied the sage. “The Empress was born
in the Radiant Palace, whence none may leave,
and lives there in solitary splendor
with her ninety-nine mute consorts. When she dies,
her ashes will be brought forth by the high priest
and cast to the seven winds.”

“But I have a plan,”
said the young man. “Let us ask
ten thousand of her subjects how long
they conceive the Imperial Nose to be. And then
the average of their answers must be precise
to within the breadth of a hair.”
He smiled, proudly.

“Your arithmetic is impressive, and does you credit,”
replied the sage. “But your technique, alas,
lacks face validity.”